

Dog lovers and baby killers

If only the world cared as much about African children and families, as they do about dogs.

Cyril Boynes, Jr.

A couple months ago, when its dog-sledding business lost customers, a Canadian company had a hundred of its dogs killed. The incident “shocked” and “angered” people. The employee who shot the dogs said he suffered “post traumatic stress” from killing them and wants compensation.

Animal activists used the incident in campaigns against dog sled rides. “I don’t think society is willing to accept that animals should be killed just because they are surplus or don’t suit the purpose they were born for,” said one. “The magnitude of this atrocity is so shocking – our heads are reeling,” another said.

Huskies are beautiful, gentle animals, and I’m really sad that this happened. But the world needs to put this in perspective. Humans eat animals. Our cars kill them along highways. Wind turbines kill eagles and other birds. More important, what about people?

My wife Fiona Kobusingye lost her son, two sisters and four cousins to malaria. Her nephew is permanently brain-damaged because of it. Almost everyone I know has lost at least one child or sibling to this killer disease. Despite millions of bednets, malaria still kills more African children than any other disease.

I cannot help thinking it would really be nice if, just once in awhile, animal lovers, environmentalists, journalists and other people would care half as much about African babies, children and families, as about dogs.

A hundred dogs are killed, and activists and newspapers make it a huge story.

Last year, almost *one hundred thousand* Ugandan children and adults were killed by malaria. And yet, nobody seemed to care – certainly not enough to write a story about it, or get outraged that callous anti-pesticide activists lie about DDT risks and prevent the use of DDT and other insecticides that could prevent malaria, yellow fever and other diseases that cause so much suffering, poverty and death on our continent.

It’s as if anti-pesticide greens believe we Africans are “surplus” people on an “over-populated” planet and don’t “suit the purposes” they think people should be born for. It’s as if our misery and deaths don’t mean anything. This is the real atrocity, and our African heads are reeling.

Yes, government agencies, private foundations, school children and other kind people from rich, malaria-free countries do send bednets, so at least some babies and pregnant women can sleep under one. But nets get torn, people don’t always use them or hang them properly, and they only reduce malaria by 20 or 30 percent. That’s why we need additional weapons – like DDT and other insecticides.

DDT keeps most mosquitoes from even going into homes. It irritates any that do come in, so they are less likely to bite. It kills any that land on walls after a blood meal, so they can’t transmit malaria to other victims. DDT is cheap and long lasting: one spray is good for six months or more. No other chemical in existence does all this, at any price.

To break the transmission cycle and stop malaria, we need to reduce mosquito populations, keep them away from people, and treat infected people quickly. Nets are essential. So are better houses and hospitals (with screens on doors and windows), greater efforts to remove mosquito resting areas near homes, and access to the best possible drugs.

But we also need chemicals to kill mosquito larvae, insecticides to kill adults, and DDT as a long-lasting spatial repellent to keep mosquitoes out of our homes. We need every one of these weapons, not just the ones chemical-hating ideologues approve of, or we will forever be burying our children.

We are constantly told the DDT we spray on walls to keep mosquitoes out of our houses, and the insecticides we use to kill these insects, are dangerous, have undesirable side effects and shouldn’t be used. But as Dr. Rutledge Taylor explains in his new film, “3 Billion and Counting,” years of research actually prove that DDT is safe for people and the environment. See

<http://www.3billionandcounting.com/> and read *The Excellent Powder*, by Donald Roberts and Richard Tren.)

As Dr. Taylor points out, no one has ever died or been seriously hurt from DDT. Its worst effects are skin rashes and speculative (but unproven) connections to early lactation failure in nursing mothers and various other minor problems. Both Dr. Gordon Edwards and Dr. Taylor have actually eaten large amounts of DDT – and not been harmed.

We all know what malaria does. Besides lactation failure and low birth weights in babies, malaria makes people horribly sick and unable to work, leaves millions permanently brain-damaged, and kills millions more in the most awful, painful ways imaginable. Why anyone – especially Africans – would oppose using weapons that can stop this terrible carnage is impossible to imagine.

But a lot of people listen to the constant lies, told by baby-killing, pesticide-hating activists – and believe them. It's bad enough that Greenpeace, Environmental Defense, Pesticide Action Network and the Stockholm Convention Secretariat tell these lies and want to ban DDT from malaria programs by 2020. It's much worse that the Global Environment Facility, United Nations Environment Programme and even some bureaucrats in the World Health Organization support the ban.

But it's unconscionable that Ugandan companies and politicians are doing it, too.

Organic food companies claim even a trace of DDT on their produce or flowers will keep them out of Europe. That is false. Their crops just cannot have DDT above certain levels – and that will not happen from DDT sprayed on walls. But what's really absurd is that tobacco companies refuse to allow the barest detectable trace of DDT on cancer-causing tobacco that they are happy to sell to Europeans, and Europeans are happy to smoke.

It's not just hypocrisy. For these companies, government agencies and activist groups to put their salaries, profits and ideologies ahead of the health and lives of African babies is immoral. It's manslaughter.

Decisions about using DDT, larvacides and insecticides (along with nets and drugs) need to be made by African health ministers – not by activists, animal lovers, or environmental and agricultural interests. These groups are spending more money trying to get rid of DDT than the world is spending to control and eradicate malaria – when almost three billion people are at risk of getting this disease, and a million die from it, year after year.

We need to use DDT and other insecticides carefully – and we are doing so. However, in the end, if we don't use them, our wonderful, brilliant, athletic, musical, hard-working children and parents will be struck down, brain-damaged and killed by malaria.

Or more accurately, they will be murdered by self-centered ideologues, businessmen, politicians, and even WHO and other medical doctors who are violating their oath to save lives.

This has to end. We need to get our priorities straight – and understand what the real risks are. We need to pray that this insane opposition to disease-preventing, life-saving chemicals will be replaced soon with a concern for babies and parents that is equal to their concern for sled dogs.

Cyril Boynes, Jr. is co-chair of the Congress of Racial Equality Uganda and a tireless advocate for health and prosperity in Africa and all other developing regions.